

one historian as a normal shift in cultural focus, one in which the community saw a greater purpose in working toward the current issue of regaining access to civil rights that had been taken away.⁶⁷

The effect of the riot on the Masons and other fraternal orders is largely unknown but, since fraternal orders were the cornerstone of community and provided benevolent assistance, it can be surmised that their role became more pronounced and vital to the development of an independent African American community.⁶⁸ Masonic lodges in North Carolina opened soon after the Civil War; and the primary members of the lodges were landowners and skilled tradesmen. In fact, more than half of Giblem Lodge's members were landowners. There was a close connection between membership in a lodge and economic success. Communities such as Wilmington that were supported by a strong and active lodge benefited financially. However, Giblem experienced a major shift in membership by the turn of the century. Only five of its officers in 1900 had been members for more than ten years and many of the lodges founding members and established leaders were no longer involved in the organization. Due to the shift in membership, and reflective of the fact that many of the lodges new members lacked institutional memory or were financially secure landholders, the overall economic status of lodge members was lower in 1900

than when the lodge was founded in 1870.⁶⁹ Despite the changes of faces within the lodge, Giblem's members aided the business community by housing businesses in its large hall at the corner of Eighth and Princess Streets and renting portions of its other properties to black businesses.⁷⁰ Further, the lodge continued to participate as a part of the larger statewide and national organization to provide death benefits to members' widows and children.

A bulwark of the African American community was the network of religious institutions that developed in the city over the decades following emancipation. Prominent churches such as St. Stephen's A. M. E. Zion, St. Mark's Episcopal, and Christ's Congregational (later Gregory) shepherded their congregations through the aftermath of the riot and provided a core of stability for the city's African American community. Just as the black business community learned new methods to adapt to the purchasing power of their customers, churches developed methods to help many of the city's residents through the difficulties of newfound unemployment and poverty well into the twentieth century.⁷¹ Despite financial declines among the city's African Americans, parishioners maintained their churches, keeping the buildings and grounds in good repair and providing consistent improvements. The churches funded their activities through various methods, including local fundraisers as well as

⁶⁷ Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 260.

⁶⁸ Wilmington supported a number of fraternal organizations in addition to the Masons for both men and women. The second largest male organization was the Odd Fellows. Women also created fraternal clubs of their own, most of which were benevolent or charity organizations. For a detailed description of many of the clubs and societies that prospered in Wilmington, see Bill Reaves' *Strength Through Struggle*.

⁶⁹ Membership in the lodge was contingent on prompt payment of monthly fees. Failure to pay the fees resulted in revocation of membership. Kenzer found that only about 1/3 of the new members of Giblem Lodge owned real estate whereas almost half of the lodge's founders owned property in the city. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 69-72.

⁷⁰ Kenzer, 73.

⁷¹ St. Mark's Episcopal Church operated several missions in the city including a school on Harnett Street and a supervised summer playground facility on North Eighth. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 135-6.